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## Book Reviews

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*Studies in Ancient Furniture: Couches and Beds of the Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans.* By CAROLINE L. RANSOM. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1905. Pp. 128, with 29 plates. \$4.50 net.

As a student of ancient furniture Miss Ransom is already known to archaeologists by an article published in the *Jahrbuch* of the German Institute. The present volume shows the same thoroughness and sane judgment; at the same time she has treated the subject in such wise that the general reader, and in particular the student of classical literature, will follow her discussion with interest. The student of ancient life will not find here any radically new views; he will find the material carefully gathered and grouped in chronological order, various monuments not easily accessible are published and discussed, and the style of ancient couches is handled in a helpful manner.

The importance of the couch in an ancient house is clear when one remembers that much the same article of furniture served as a bed at night, as a couch for men reclining at dinner, and as a "lounge" for writing and study. With some exceptions, the chairs were constructed on the same principle as couches. It appears from this volume that couches did not change as much as might have been expected in the ten or twelve centuries under consideration. After the early simple couches made by mortising rails into wooden legs, two main types are found: couches with square legs, richly ornamented with carving and inlaid work, and couches with turned legs. For the couch with heavy square legs, into which the rails are set, a type was developed in Greece early in the fifth century; the legs were deeply incised near the middle and ornamented at the incision with scrolls springing from the base of palmettes. The turned legs on the other type of couch varied greatly in length and solidity at different epochs; above the legs at one or both ends of the couch might rise curved rests (*fulcra*) which normally were ornamented by a head, usually a horse's head, at the outer end and a medallion at the lower end. These *fulcra* were less graceful and more nearly erect on later Roman couches. Under the Roman Empire a third type of couch is common: its straight legs, high head and foot pieces, and back of equal height, have the simple utility which one would expect of the Roman people. On all these couches the rails connecting the legs were often carved or inlaid with ivory, metal, or wood. Finally interlaced thongs of leather supported the mattresses and pillows. The frame was commonly made of wood, with bronze for the *fulcra* and occasionally for the legs.

Miss Ransom frankly acknowledges the constructional errors which appear

in the representation of couches: the light upper rail of the Greek couch, the weakness of the incised leg, and the weak turned leg on some heavy Roman couches. Some working drawings by a modern furniture designer make clearer the methods of construction. It appears from the drawings that the constructional defects shown in the couches on Greek vases are real, although not so radical as to make one distrust the correctness of the representations. On the whole, the history of this industrial art follows the same lines as the higher arts. The ornament of earlier couches consists mainly of double volutes, palmettes, rosettes, and link designs. With the appearance of carved *fulcra* on couches with turned legs, the artistic interest centers in this plastic ornament. For the later Roman "sofas" less is known about ornamentation; probably richness of material in a measure took the place of artistic decoration.

I have found no discussion in this volume of certain questions on which I should have been glad of Miss Ransom's opinion; e. g., as to the peculiarities of the *lectus triclinaris*, if such existed; or again as to the exact position of the *fulcrum* on the couch frame (cf. Baumeister, Fig. 329, and *Jahrb. d. arch. Inst.* XV, A. A. 178, for two slightly different positions). And one regrets that Miss Ransom was unable to carry farther her researches in Italian museums (p. 7).

A. F.

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*The Gospel of Mark.* With Notes and Vocabulary. By WILLIAM PRENTISS DREW. Boston: Benj. H. Sanborn & Co. Pp. 133. \$0.75.

The general neglect of the New Testament in the Greek classes of our schools is a matter of sincere regret. It is quite as desirable that college students should become familiar with Hellenistic Greek as with the Doric or Aeolic or Ionic dialect. And the greatest and best specimen of Hellenistic Greek is found in the books of the New Testament. It would also be a great help and encouragement to the high-school student who has found Greek so difficult, if it could be made practicable for him to read in the simple, easy Greek of the first century one or more of the familiar gospels. One reason why this has not been done more extensively is that we have had no textbook made to meet such needs. That want Professor Drew has essayed with this little edition of the gospel by Mark to supply. But in attempting to adapt his book at the same time to the needs of the college student in a "rapid reading" class and the high-school pupil in his preparatory work, he has, in the average, missed both; but the great bulk of the notes would prove far more enlightening to the high-school boy, who needs this sort of drill in forms and syntax, than to the college man, who has all that behind him. The same note repeated again and again, the mass of grammatical references, the notes in the form of questions addressed to the reader, the explanation of simple forms and constructions could be helpful only to the beginner.